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Diocese de Dili
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Venerable Monsignor
Martinho da Costa Lopes

I received your letter and want to thank you for the clarification and news.

We are now in worse socio-political conditions. As you know the situation has become worse since August 8th. In all administrative areas people have been imprisoned (in Dili alone 600 people) and now they are going to be tried in military courts. Other people have disappeared. We do not know if these courts are impartial and if there are defense lawyers... In the areas of Lospalos, Viqueque, Baucau and Ainaro the war exists and the populations are encircled. They suffer from sickness, hunger, lack of liberty and persecution. In Lospalos alone there are ten battalions and these bapaks (Indonesians) cannot win the war. They thought they would clean up the situation by the end of December 1983, but now we are already in February and the end of the military operation cannot be seen.They (the Indonesians) started again to mobilize the civilian populations in the administrative areas of Covalima, Ainaro, Same, Manatuto, Baucau and Viqueque. We are surprised how in this country with so many battalions, helicopters, tanks and bombers they still need the support of the rayat (local population). And there the men go armed with sticks and cutlasses, leaving their ricefields and gardens. It is misery, Monsignor ! The Red Cross does not enter the prisons, nor can I celebrate Eucarist for the political prisoners in the Komarca (a Dili prison).
In Muapitini (Lospalos) and Iliomar there were "public judgements"*, this means people implicated for having contacts with the mountain areas were killed in front of the other inhabitants by knife, cutlass and by beating with sticks and by their own family members... And the bapak (Indonesian) laughs with contentment, rubs his hands together and says that it is not his fault... It is a macabre situation that we are living. This is more or less a pale image of what we are going through. I ask you, Monsignor, to continue to pray for us and to launch an appeal to the free world to open its eyes to the barbarities of which the Indonesians are capable. The Church is being persecuted and accused and our schools are being searched and the students are being interrogated. The residence of the Salesian priests in Baucau

* quotation marks were put by the translator

was "savagely" searched by the Red Berets (elite Indonesian military units). Well, Monsignor, I hope that this letter will reach your hands. Without anything else special to communicate I only ask you to take care of our economic interests in the Metropolis and to convince the priests who are there to return to Timor.

United in the Lord, the servant always at disposal

Carlos Filipe X. Belo
Apostolic Administrator